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New York

Chairperson: Mrs. Juul ..... (Norway)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 82 to 97 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairperson: This morning it is my intention first to have an informal exchange of views with Mr. Tanaka and the three directors of the regional disarmament centres. Afterwards, we shall continue with our thematic discussion.

I will now suspend the meeting in order to continue our discussion in an informal setting.

The meeting was suspended at 10.10 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.

The Chairperson: Today the Committee will now continue with its thematic discussion on conventional weapons. We still have a long list of speakers remaining on this issue; therefore, I would kindly request delegations to keep their interventions as brief as possible.

Ms. Mourabit (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is taking the floor in the thematic discussion on conventional weapons to deal with the specific item of small arms and light weapons.

The excessive accumulation and illicit trade in small arms is threatening international peace and security and is compromising the economic and social development of victimized countries and plunging them into destitution and poverty.

In the struggle against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, we would like to highlight the adoption in 2005 of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Also of note was the fact that the May 2006 United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects concluded without identifying any new measures to combat this trend more effectively.

We should agree that if these arms represent a great threat for many countries, it is because of their illegal circulation. International action to identify and trace these weapons is a priority. The instrument adopted regarding the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons, despite its legally non-binding nature, remains a good starting point and necessitates immediate implementation by States.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is further exacerbating transnational crime and armed conflict, thereby aggravating the insecure situation in the affected countries. It is compromising efforts to lay the foundations for a lasting peace, thwarting efforts at reconciliation and post-conflict peacebuilding, preventing the protection of the rights of peoples, perpetuating poverty and posing an obstacle to development.

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When we adopted the 2001 Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, we committed ourselves to undertaking the multilateral efforts required to effectively combat this scourge. In this context, the elaboration of adequate mechanisms would likely allow us to block illicit trading in small arms. Similarly, regional and subregional initiatives to mobilize resources and skills to combat illicit trading in small arms should also be considered.

In order to ensure a more effective effort in combating the illicit trade in small arms, it is important to continue the work we have begun. My country, Morocco, is in favour of concluding a legally binding instrument on arms brokering. An integrated and global approach with regard to this issue, which would emerge from an international consensus, would enable us to give this project all the necessary impetus to make our endeavour a major success.

Finally, my country cannot conclude without appealing to the international community to provide the necessary machinery for international cooperation to wage a global, efficient and effective fight against small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Bugallo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Spain would like to express its satisfaction at the statements made by the delegations of Costa Rica on behalf of the Central American Integration System (SICA) and by Mexico during this thematic debate on conventional weapons, and also with regard to the statements made pertaining to small arms and light weapons and to anti-personnel mines.

With regard to small arms and light weapons, Spain would like to congratulate the organizers and participants of the meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean region that was held in Antigua, Guatemala, the outcome of which was the adoption of the Antigua Declaration. We fully share the objectives and aspirations enshrined in that Declaration to strengthen the fight against the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and more specifically, the United Nations Programme of Action in that regard.

With respect to activities undertaken against landmines in the Central American region, the Spanish Government supports and welcomes efforts undertaken by SICA member States, by Mexico and by the Organization of American States (OAS) to meet the objectives for achieving a Central American region free of landmines, as well as to ensure that an American continent of the future can also be free of landmines. In this regard, Spain will continue to support these efforts, both on the bilateral level as well as through the voluntary trust fund established against landmines under the aegis of the OAS. In 2006, Spain has provided some $750,000 to the fund.

Ms. Hew-A-Kee (Suriname): Thank you, Madam Chairperson, for the opportunity to address this Committee on the important matter of conventional weapons under agenda item 90.

The proliferation of conventional weapons continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. In countries throughout the world, and particularly in Africa and the Caribbean region, the uncontrolled spread of conventional weapons continues to be the cause of conflict and organized crime, especially narco-trafficking.

In this regard permit me to note that small arms and light weapons, in particular, pose a threat to the national security infrastructure, impede social and economic development and can even be the cause of the destabilization of an entire region.

Suriname remains committed to the full implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in 2001. We view the Programme of Action as an important tool at the disposal of the international community to address the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The adoption of a politically binding international instrument on the marking and tracing, in a timely and reliable manner, of small arms and light weapons marks yet another effort of the international community to eradicate this deadly trade.

We had high expectations that the recently concluded Review Conference would have been able to provide further guidance on fully implementing the 2001 Programme of Action. It is therefore regrettable that the Review Conference did not produce a meaningful outcome.

My delegation is of the considered view that international cooperation, including technical and financial assistance and capacity-building, is of critical importance in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We acknowledge that the primary responsibility lies with individual Member

States, but we are also convinced that national efforts should be complemented by international cooperation. In that context, we welcome all forms of cooperation and assistance at the subregional, regional and international levels.

Thus, more than ever before, there is an urgent need to regulate and reduce the trade in these weapons. Their impact, in terms of the toll in civilian deaths and victims, compels us to put effective measures in place.

In that respect, we are concerned about the uncontrolled sale and transfer of conventional weapons. It is essential that we have a multilateral framework — based on the principles of international law, international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations — to provide us with guarantees that these weapons do not end up in the wrong hands.

Every day, many people are killed by conventional weapons. The international community should step up to the plate and demonstrate the political will necessary to end the suffering caused to innocent civilians, especially women and children.

While we cannot compare our situation to the gravity of the existence of anti-personnel landmines in other countries, I am pleased to note that, with international assistance, Suriname was able to clear the anti-personnel landmines that were laid during its domestic conflict in the 1980s.

Implementing the Ottawa Convention is necessary in order to increase stability, peace and security throughout the world. Suriname reaffirms its commitment to the full implementation of the Ottawa Convention and continues to cooperate with the relevant regional and international organizations. My country supports the efforts to universalize the Ottawa Convention in order to achieve a mine-free world where people can live safe and secure lives.

We express the hope that the next biennial conference on the 2001 Programme of Action will provide new impetus for meaningful progress towards the goal of ridding the world of the deadly scourge of the illicit trafficking and transfer of conventional weapons. The adoption of the Programme of Action has spurred a wide range of initiatives at the national, regional and international levels. The international community should build on those achievements and create a much safer society in which people can work in peace and security to achieve the much needed goal of sustainable development.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I should like to begin my statement by welcoming the various reports presented to the Committee on behalf of the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs — particularly the report just presented by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, the report by Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, in his capacity as President-designate of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as the report presented by Mr. Roberto García Moritán, Chairman of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

Indeed, despite the lack of the desired progress at the Review Conference on the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms, as spelled out in the report and in the statements made by many delegations, we remain confident that the Committee will succeed in finding the way forward by drawing on lessons learned and banking on some of the positive outcomes achieved in the process.

Although my country is invariably concerned with the various disarmament issues pertaining to conventional weapons, canvassed in this thematic discussion of the Committee, I would rather dwell on an area of particular interest for Ethiopia: the issue of landmines. As a country that has been severely affected by the widespread havoc caused by the unexploded ordnance inherited from past external wars and internal conflicts — particularly in its northern and eastern parts — Ethiopia has been struggling to withstand the painful devastation caused by those deadly devices.

Thus, in view of the tremendous harm being inflicted on human lives as well as on development activities, particularly agriculture, the Government of Ethiopia has already designed an all-around national plan and established a responsible body at the federal level — the Ethiopian Mine Action Office — to deal effectively with the problem.

Thanks to concerted national action in that regard, a number of promising results have been

registered over the past few years alone, as shown by the following practical examples.

A national landmine impact survey, conducted in 2003 and 2004, indicated that more than 1.9 million people in the country are directly or indirectly affected by landmines.

Out of all the identified areas, some 2,226 hectares of land were cleared of unexploded mines between March 2002 and March 2006. During that clearing operation, 1,663 anti-personnel landmines and 23,901 unexploded anti-tank mines were safely removed and detonated. Seventy-six per cent of the total land area thus far cleared of mines has been put to use for economic and social development activities by local communities.

The rehabilitation of landmine survivors has been given paramount importance by the Government of Ethiopia, which is doing its level best to find a lasting solution for victims with the help of a number of concerned international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

To raise popular awareness about the issue of land mines, 216,263 inhabitants of three major regions have been given mine risk education since January 2003, and that task is being carried out on a sustainable basis. A strong sense of collaboration is also being nurtured among the local community in those affected areas, expediting the identification and clearing of unexploded ordnance.

Moreover, the process of setting up a national committee comprising all domestic stakeholders and assigning a national focal point for the effective implementation of the Ottawa Convention is currently well under way and is expected to be finalized within a short period of time. We are confident that, once that essential process is satisfactorily completed, Ethiopia will be in a still better position to fulfil all its obligations under the Treaty — including the submission of national reports on a regular basis — in the near future.

Here, it must be underscored that, as one of the 24 parties to the Ottawa Convention known to have a high number of mine victims and survivors, Ethiopia needs continued financial and technical assistance commensurate with the extent of the problem still to be tackled. Indeed, while the international community — particularly the developed countries and the concerned bodies of the United Nations — deserve thanks for the kind assistance that they have extended to Ethiopia so far, we remain confident that their cooperation will be intensified with a view to buttressing our effort at the national level.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Ethiopia's firm commitment to discharge all its treaty obligations and to uphold the United Nations resolutions hitherto adopted in the area of disarmament in general and with respect to conventional weapons in particular.

Mr. Andreasen (Denmark): In his statement at the 12th meeting, the representative of Finland, speaking on behalf of the European Union, emphasized that the uncontrolled proliferation and wide misuse of small arms and light weapons are at the heart of the main security challenges of our time.

The delegation of Denmark fully associates itself with the cluster statement on conventional arms made by the presidency of the European Union. However, my delegation would have liked to stress that Denmark believes that armed conflicts are aggravated and prolonged due to unrestrained arms transfers, which led to insecurity, poverty and human rights violations.

We therefore strongly support the adoption of an international arms trade treaty to establish a common standard for global trade in conventional arms. Such an instrument should be legally binding and include all conventional weapons. Denmark encourages other Member States to support the draft resolution on an arms trade treaty (A/C.1/61/L.55), now under consideration, establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms, thereby creating a formal mechanism to examine the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Madam Chairperson, first of all, I would like to congratulate you on the skilful manner in which you are guiding our work here in our Committee. I am also grateful to you for organizing this interactive debate, which is proving to be highly useful in that it allows for an in-depth exchange of views on the items included on the agenda of the First Committee.

Because of their devastating effects, small arms and light weapons are increasingly being compared to weapons of mass destruction. Every year, these

weapons cause the death or mutilation of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. They are responsible for the exacerbation and extension of armed conflicts and, to a large extent, they promote crime and terrorism, and put at risk efforts made towards recovery and development.

My country is located in Central Africa, a region that, for many years now, has been a source of concern for the international community due to the various conflicts that have taken place in this region. Therefore, Cameroon cannot remain indifferent to a debate that addresses small arms and light weapons. The numerous pockets of tension and armed conflict that have torn apart Central Africa in recent years have turned this region into a veritable powder keg. Due to the porosity of our borders, even countries that have not been directly affected by armed conflict, such as Cameroon, are, nevertheless, exposed to the harmful effects of these conflicts because of the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. Armed attacks, which were infrequent in the past, have now become common. There is widespread banditry, in particular by means of roadblocks established in border regions. This is a serious threat that impacts our peoples' well being, jeopardizing efforts and investments made in support of development.

Hence, members of the Committee will understand that my Government attaches the greatest importance to this matter, and Cameroon is determined to make our contribution to the international efforts to combat the proliferation of and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. In this regard, Cameroon, alongside the United Kingdom and other countries, has pledged its commitment to an initiative in support of an arms trade treaty. My country is a sponsor of the draft resolution on this subject (A/C.1/61/L.55) and plans to participate actively in efforts to ensure that this laudable initiative becomes a reality. Clearly, an effective treaty on the arms trade, which would provide States the common international standards to guarantee a responsible arms trade, help reduce the proliferation and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, spare countless lives and ensure the creation of more conducive conditions for development and stability.

In order to put forward a collective and concerted front in dealing with the scourge of the proliferation of an illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, the countries of the subregion have launched a number of initiatives within the framework of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Thus, in 2003, we organized a seminar in Brazzaville on the implementation in Central Africa of the 2001 Programme of Action on the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, after which we adopted a programme of priority actions. Addressing the follow-up to the seminar during the meetings of the Committee, our ministers examined the implementation of this priority programme in their respective countries. They deplored the difficulties that continue to beset the efforts of their countries in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, in particular with regard to the porous nature of borders, which promotes the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. They also deplored the lack of appropriate detection equipment and of adequately trained personnel, as well as the lack of information and specific data as to the nature of and quantities of weapons in circulation.

During the twenty-fourth ministerial meeting of the Committee, which was held in Kigali from 25 to 29 September 2006, ministers of foreign affairs and of security of Central Africa expressed their deep concern with regard to the ongoing deterioration of the situation in Darfur and the threat it poses to the security and stability of countries of the subregion, in particular given the resulting increase in the flows of illicit weapons and the analogous resulting increase in the lack of security.

In order to explore the ways and means of dealing with this worrying situation, the ministers decided to hold a subregional conference in Yaoundé in 2007 on how to address cross-border security problems in Central Africa. This conference is the continuation of the high-level tripartite meeting on cross-border insecurity that was held in Yaoundé from 25 to 26 August 2005, under the aegis of the Governments of Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Chad, and in cooperation with the United Nations Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic.

The aim of this conference is to mobilize the international community, based on specific border security projects. The conference will focus chiefly on the problem of the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons crossing the porous borders of the countries of Central Africa and will provide an opportunity to examine the ways and means to put an

end to these problems, particularly by securing the transfers and stockpiling of weapons, by reinforcing border controls through the adoption of legislation and adequate regulation, and through the establishment of an effective system for cooperation between the security forces of the concerned countries, with a view to the eventual establishment of a cooperation mechanism for the management of questions relating to the lack of cross-border security.

The support of the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations active in the field of small arms and light weapons will all be necessary in order to help organize these important meetings to be held under the aegis of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Therefore, this is an opportunity to appeal for increased contributions to the Special Fund that was created to support the activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

Like other countries, Cameroon was disappointed by the mixed results of the 2006 United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Nevertheless, my country forcefully reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action and welcomes the support that the Programme has been given within the international community. Undeniably, efforts undertaken in order to implement the Programme of Action must be pursued on the national, regional and international levels and the international community must mobilize itself to find solutions designed to resolve the pending questions of the 2001 Conference.

In this respect, my country welcomes the adoption in December 2005 of a political Instrument on the marking and tracing of light weapons. We believe that the Instrument is a further step in the right direction. Efforts in this area must be sustained, in particular to ensure that legally binding measures are adopted and to take into account the question of munitions, without which light weapons could not be deployable.

In a similar vein, we wish to voice our full support for the process for the adoption of an instrument on brokering. Cameroon believes that the international community must finally pay due attention to the matter of the illicit trade in man-portable air-defence systems. It is crucial that we adopt common international standards on the transfers of these types of weapons as soon as possible.

Mr. Basu (India): If the entire spectrum of weaponry that is the focus of disarmament and arms control measures was to be placed within a pyramid, it would have a three-tiered structure. Nuclear weapons, our foremost priority, would constitute the top of the pyramid, followed by chemical and biological weapons as the middle layer. But the broadest part of the pyramid would be made up of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons. While it is vital to address the apex of the pyramid, its base constitutes a larger and more contingent concern, affecting directly a large mass of people afflicted by conventional conflict.

Unregulated and illicit trade in conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons are continuing to have devastating consequences. The direct effects include death, injury, trauma and the cost of caring for the wounded and disabled, not to mention the destruction of the civilian infrastructure. The indirect costs include displacement, destitution and prolonged underdevelopment. The proliferation of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons gravely endangers the security of States, disrupts their social harmony and hampers growth and development. The ready availability of illicit weapons fosters organized crime, drug trafficking and illegal exploitation of natural resources. It promotes sectarian violence, insurgency and terrorism.

India is therefore strongly committed to the full and effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It augurs well that we now have an international instrument containing a vital commitment by States Members of the United Nations to mark all small arms and light weapons according to universal standards and to cooperate with one another in tracing illicit ones. We now hope for similar cooperative action in other related areas concerning small arms, including on brokering and the prohibition of transfer of weapons to non-State actors, including terrorists. We believe future biennial meetings of States would provide a welcome opportunity to take stock of

the extent of national implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. Thereafter, the General Assembly should consider further practical steps required to strengthen and promote its implementation.

India's approach to disarmament and international security is guided by a strong commitment to international humanitarian law, of which the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is one of the principal instruments. India is among those 20 States parties that adhere to the entire CCW package, namely, the Convention, amended article 1, and all five Protocols, including Amended Protocol II. We support the draft plan of action to be adopted at the forthcoming Review Conference, which stipulates seven action points for promoting the universality of the Convention.

India also favours strengthening the Convention through a compliance mechanism. In addition, we support the creation of a sponsorship programme to facilitate enhanced participation in CCW-related meetings by States parties affected by mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Such a programme may also broaden awareness about the Convention and help to promote its universalization.

The CCW Review Conference next month will be a significant event. We are happy that Protocol V on ERW will enter into force on 12 November, coinciding with the Review Conference. This Protocol provides for post-conflict remedial measures of a generic nature in order to minimize the risks and effects of ERW. It includes generic preventive measures aimed at minimizing the occurrence of ERW and is intended to eradicate the threat that unexploded ordnance and abandoned explosive ordnance pose to the civilian population. India, which is among those 23 countries that have already ratified the Protocol, steered the work of the ERW Working Group for two years.

Our policy on land mines use is regulated by an abiding concern for protection of civilian life from the threats posed by irresponsible use of mines other than anti-personnel mines, including improvised explosive devices.

During the last four years of work carried out by the Group of Government Experts, India has contributed constructively to the process of finding common ground on a whole range of issues, including the technically complex issues of detectability and active life of mines other than anti-personnel mines. India has contributed constructively to the process of finding common ground on the whole range of issues. These include the technically complex issues of detectability and active life of mines other than anti-personnel mines. We have a forward-looking approach. We believe that, even on the contentious issues, a balanced approach could accommodate national security imperatives, humanitarian requirements, financial costs and technological constraints. We also believe that a future instrument on mines other than anti-personnel mines would supplement the existing instruments on anti-personnel mines in addressing humanitarian challenges in a more comprehensive manner.

India is conscious of the humanitarian risks resulting from the indiscriminate use and transfer of anti-personnel mines. We therefore support the humanitarian objectives of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. At the same time, we recognize the limitation of the Convention in not addressing national security concerns of States with long land borders, where minefields at frontiers will continue to form an important component of defence in times of conflict. While our security requirements necessitate the use of anti-personnel mines, these are used in accordance with internationally acknowledged security norms and safety parameters. We are in favour of strengthened cooperation in mine clearance, including the unrestricted transfer of mine clearance technology, equipment and training; risk education; rehabilitation; victim assistance; and socio-economic betterment of mine-affected communities.

In the field of conventional disarmament, we believe that an enhanced level of transparency would contribute greatly to confidence-building and security among States. It would also help in the detection of arms transferred illegally. India has supported the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as an important confidence-building measure and has submitted annual reports on the export and import of conventional arms. We note that the Register has evolved through the triennial reviews carried out by the Group of Governmental Experts. We are happy that at the latest review, in July 2006, the Group recommended that States that wished to do so could also report their transfer of small arms and light weapons to the Register on the basis of an optional standardized form. It also recommended a lower

reporting threshold for warships and submarines. These are welcome steps.

We shall continue to work towards steady progress in the areas of conventional disarmament, small arms and light weapons and the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) process. In particular, we hope to have a positive and forward-looking outcome at the CCW Review Conference, to be held in Geneva in November.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): In my intervention, I will touch on the subjects of conventional weapons, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and small arms and light weapons.

The preponderant focus on the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and now increasingly on small arms and light weapons, tends to divert the international community's attention from the regulation and reduction of conventional arms and armed forces. Conventional weapons and armaments are becoming something of a blind spot of the international community.

In his statement to the First Committee (see A/C.1/61/PV.2), the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs highlighted the threat from small arms and light weapons, landmines, sub-munitions and artillery rockets. Overemphasis on small arms can eclipse the salience of sophisticated conventional weapons and technology being traded in huge quantities around the globe. Trade in combat aircraft, aircraft carriers, airborne and early warning and control systems, missile defence systems, nuclear submarines and warships disrupts regional balances and escalates tensions. Such trade flourishes in a moral and legal vacuum.

In 1978, the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) characterized the global military expenditure as a "colossal waste of resources" (resolution S-10/2, para. 16) and called for reduction in such spending and for reinvestment of resources into efforts to fight poverty and improve the human condition.

In 2006, by comparison, global military expenditure exceeding $1.1 trillion is staggering. This is about 2.5 per cent of world gross domestic product, or $173 per capita. The United Nations, mandated to maintain international peace and security, has a budget which is less than 1.5 per cent of the world's military expenditure. The third-world countries are the favoured destination for arms sales. New markets are being explored, created and sought after. The total value of international arms transfer agreements during the period 2001 to 2004 was $131 billion. Developing countries accounted for 63.2 per cent of all international arms deliveries. Globalized arms production and sales ignore the grave humanitarian, political and strategic consequences of conventional weapons proliferation. Arms sellers encourage all sides in a conflict to buy more weapons. Some of them see conflict situations as a unique selling opportunity.

Recent studies have also shown that asymmetries in conventional armaments in conflict areas propel military spending and promote insecurity. It is therefore imperative that we pursue conventional arms control at the lowest possible levels of armaments and military forces, in order to promote regional and international peace and security. The preservation of a balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest levels of armaments should be the prime objective of conventional arms control. SSOD-I gave this clear direction: together with negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures, negotiations should be carried out on the balanced reduction of forces and of conventional armaments, based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties, with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military level, taking into account the need of all States to protect their security.

We believe that conventional arms control needs to be pursued primarily in the regional and subregional contexts, since most threats to peace and security arise mainly in States located in the same region or subregion. In this regard, we can adapt and follow good practices. The value of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, a cornerstone of European security, cannot be overemphasized. States with larger military capabilities have a special responsibility in promoting such agreements for regional security.

We must step up efforts to curb excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons, as well as their uncontrolled transfers. Conventional arms control must address the root causes of insecurity, emanating from disputes, conflicts and threat perceptions, and must seek to promote balance among regional States. We need to follow up such affirmations with concrete action. First, the Department for Disarmament Affairs can analyse the data on arms transfers and help States develop benchmarks for conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the standardized instrument, by themselves, will not lead to limitations in arms transfers. They should be used not only for reporting but also as a means to develop a global norm towards transparency in armaments. The data extrapolated from those instruments can serve as a significant early-warning mechanism, contributing to the prevention of conflict and to restraint in arms acquisitions. Secondly, the Conference on Disarmament can consider formulation of the principles that can serve as a framework for regional agreements on conventional arms control.

A stable balance of conventional forces is necessary to ensure strategic stability, particularly in regions riven by tension. Massive introduction of sophisticated weaponry accentuates conventional asymmetries and compels greater reliance on nuclear and missile deterrence in the regions that have such capabilities.

In South Asia, we are pursuing a strategic restraint regime, which has three constituents: conflict resolution, nuclear and missile restraint and conventional balance. Even as we sustain dialogue to address outstanding issues and work towards strategic stability and nuclear risk reduction, we will continue to strive for a conventional balance at the lowest possible level of armaments. In the interest of peace and security in South Asia, there must be restraint in both the demand for and the supply of conventional weapons.

We look forward to a successful outcome of the Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, under the leadership of its President-designate, Ambassador François Rivasseau. Sufficient ground has been covered in the successive Preparatory Committee meetings. On compliance, we should be close to resolving the residual issues. Differences remain on anti-vehicle mines (AVM), in particular in the areas of detectability, active life, recording and removal of minefields and the categorization of fuses and sensors. We are of the view that the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its five Protocols adequately address humanitarian aspects of mines, including AVMs. But we look forward to working with the coordinator on AVMs, who has brought a fresh approach to the subject.

We thank Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam, President of the first Review Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons, for his untiring efforts. Notwithstanding the lack of progress in producing an outcome document, the Review Conference acted as a catalyst in highlighting the importance of the objectives of the United Nations Programme of Action. Member States remain committed to the full implementation of the Programme of Action at the national, regional and international levels. The adequate provision of financial and technical international assistance can help speed up the implementation of the Programme of Action by developing countries.

While Pakistan has the floor, The Honourable Rozina Tufail, member of Pakistan's National Assembly and its Parliamentary Secretary, will introduce the draft resolution on regional disarmament.

The Chairperson: I call on the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.41.

Mrs. Tufail (Pakistan): I take the floor to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Regional disarmament", which is contained in document A/C.1/61/L.41. The draft resolution is being introduced on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Liberia, Malaysia, Nepal, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Turkey, as well as my own delegation, Pakistan.

To ensure global security and disarmament, it is imperative to pursue efforts at both the international and regional levels. Regional measures, however, are the building blocks for international security. The requisite guidelines and recommendations for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1993 provide direction and useful inputs to realize the objective of achieving disarmament at the regional

level. Those guidelines remain relevant in the present day for the promotion of regional disarmament in both conventional and non-conventional fields.

It is quite evident that, in most of the areas of tension and potential conflict — the Middle East, South Asia, North-East Asia and Central Asia — the regional approach could offer the most effective basis to promote disarmament and thus enhance security. The draft resolution that has been submitted notes the recent proposals for disarmament at the regional and subregional levels. It expresses the conviction that endeavours to promote regional disarmament enhance the security of all States. Those endeavours take into account the specific characteristics of each region and the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments.

In order to achieve those objectives, we need sustained efforts. The draft resolution stresses that point. It also affirms that regional approaches to disarmament complement each other; calls on States to conclude agreements wherever possible; welcomes the initiatives towards disarmament, non-proliferation and security undertaken by some countries at the regional and subregional levels; and supports and encourages confidence-building measures.

We believe that the adoption of this draft resolution should encourage countries concerned to step up endeavours aimed at regional disarmament. Its adoption should also help to strengthen regional and international security. The sponsors, including my delegation, hope that, as with a similar text last year, the draft resolution will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): My delegation would like to make just a few remarks about small arms and light weapons, which are without any doubt the most destructive weapons in the world today. I would like to start from where my colleague at the helm of the Programme of Action review process, Ambassador Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, concluded his statement at our 12th meeting, last Thursday. He said that it was time we heard the words of the Secretary-General: that those weapons may be small but they cause mass destruction. I share Ambassador Kariyawasam's view that time is running out and that we must commit ourselves once again to all possible efforts to stop the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons now. Some may ask, why now? Why the rush? What is the urgency? The answer is simple: thousands of innocent people are being killed or maimed every day and thousands more are starving to death or languishing in refugee camps. Virtually all these cases involve the illicit and uncontrolled circulation and use of small arms and light weapons.

Looking ahead, and following the Review Conference, it is imperative that we reassess our understanding of the humanitarian and human security implications of the problem. In that regard, my delegation hopes that next year the First Committee will hold a thematic debate, jointly with the Third Committee, on the humanitarian and human security aspects of illicit small arms and light weapons. Experts in the fields of humanitarian assistance, international humanitarian and human rights law and health would be invited to contribute to the special debate. It is important for us to acknowledge that the proliferation of these weapons is first and foremost a serious and urgent humanitarian and human security matter.

Secondly, we must reassess the global and international dimension of the problem and acknowledge the necessity of taking tough measures, especially at the international level under the aegis of the United Nations, to eradicate this scourge. Tough measures, including punitive measures, are advocated today to deal effectively with threats to international peace and security posed by nuclear weapons and weapons described as weapons of mass destruction. However, one cannot understand why there is still reluctance, or even resistance, on the part of some Member States to support tough legal measures at the international level to prevent, combat and eradicate the proliferation and use of illicit weapons — weapons that do not merely threaten peace and security but that incessantly cause mass destruction of human lives, particularly in Africa and other developing areas of the world.

Illicit activities that result in the massive destruction of innocent lives, such as those directly related to small arms and light weapons, cannot be addressed by declarations and administrative measures alone. That is why we in the West Africa subregion have gone beyond the Bamako Declaration of 2000 — on the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa — and the code of conduct for the implementation of the Moratorium to conclude, earlier this year, a legally binding instrument on small arms

and light weapons, their ammunition and other related materials.

We believe that illicit activities must be counteracted effectively by strong legal regimes, especially at the international level. We emphasize "at the international level" because we believe that there is still a tendency to underestimate the international nature of the problem, as well as the need for legally binding international instruments to complement national and regional efforts.

We in the West African subregion are delighted that, less than six months after the signing of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, a process is about to begin here in the First Committee towards a comprehensive legally binding international instrument for the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons. Once concluded, such an instrument should complement the ECOWAS and other existing regional and subregional regimes for responsible arms trade and transfer. My delegation is one of the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.55, entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms".

My delegation is pleased that some of those who did not join the overwhelming majority of States in supporting a legally binding instrument on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons have now indicated that they would support a legally binding instrument on the arms trade. We hope that others will soon follow, guided by the imperative that human security, or the protection of innocent lives, should be and should remain at the centre of all national, regional and global efforts for responsible arms trade and transfer.

Mr. Draganov (Bulgaria): As this it the first time I take the floor at this session, allow me to express my satisfaction at seeing you, Madam Chairperson, presiding over our proceedings. I am confident that your professional qualities and energetic personality will help the First Committee address the challenging issues before us in a meaningful way.

Bulgaria has already aligned itself with the statement on conventional weapons made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union (EU). I will therefore confine myself to just one point of particular relevance to my country. I am referring to draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.55, entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms".

Bulgaria is a sponsor of that initiative, which was launched by the delegation of the United Kingdom in collaboration with those of Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan and Kenya. Quite understandably, this undertaking is increasingly enjoying wider-ranging support from countries from the various regions of the world. It is in our common — and, may I say, global — interest to put in place an effective arms control treaty that would establish legally binding principles for trade in conventional weapons. Setting effective international standards in the field of the arms trade is essential to reinforce our commitment to deal with the human security and humanitarian concerns associated with the unchecked trade in arms. We believe that the gradual approach emerging from our deliberations can lead us to a vision of the scope and parameters of a possible treaty. Bulgaria supports the proposal to establish a group of governmental experts entrusted with the task of producing recommendations on the core elements of a future instrument.

Establishing common criteria for the export, import and transfer of conventional arms is largely dependant upon the ability and political will of countries to adopt robust national control measures and practices. Bulgaria has established a viable national export control system based on the principles and best practices applied within the framework of the United Nations, the EU and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The current Bulgarian legislation envisages licensing procedures for both exporting companies and brokers, as well as the issuance of a permit for each individual transaction, the provision of pre- and post-shipment assurances and verification — including end-user certificates by the competent authority of the recipient country — and a delivery verification certificate. Non-re-export assurances are also required to confirm that goods will not be resold or otherwise transferred to a third party. Strict sanctions are envisaged for possible violators, and arms-trade control instruments are constantly reviewed for possible improvement and amendment. International cooperation and the shared experience of our partners have been vital in achieving higher national standards in the control of the arms trade. That

is essentially how we see the importance of the initiative for an arms trade treaty.

Let me express the conviction of my delegation that this draft resolution is both timely and fully deserving of the approval of the Committee. Bulgaria stands ready to cooperate closely and to contribute to the process.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to reiterate its great appreciation for the clear-sightedness with which you, Madam Chairperson, have been guiding the Committee's work.

Our contribution to the thematic debate on conventional weapons will focus mainly on small arms and anti-personnel mines. However, I would first like to associate my delegation with the analysis given here a few moments ago by Ambassador Masood Khan of Pakistan regarding increases in military expenditures and the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons. My delegation underscores the intrinsic links between military expenditures on the one hand and development and the elimination of poverty throughout the world on the other. Humankind must devote fewer resources to weapons and more towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in order to eradicate extreme poverty, which takes a devastating toll on human dignity.

I shall now address the two basic points of my statement. Over the past five years, the international community has made great progress in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects clearly illustrated that fact. That was an especially positive undertaking that made it possible for States dedicated to the cause of halting the illicit trade in small arms to be better equipped to enhance the effectiveness of their efforts. In that regard, Benin calls for the strengthening of international cooperation in this area. We are committed to the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, which reflects a consistent, comprehensive approach that acknowledges the need to link the fight against the illicit trade in light weapons and ammunition with strategies aimed at conflict prevention and providing assistance for peacebuilding and development.

One of the areas in which the Review Conference faltered was in agreeing whether or not to continue the five-year review cycle of the implementation of the Programme of Action. The illicit trade in small arms continues, and we must continue to combat it. There is no doubt that the measures contained in the Programme of Action continue to be the appropriate response to combat this evil. Benin therefore does not understand why the United Nations cannot carry out another five-year review cycle to evaluate the implementation of the Programme of Action, benefiting from the lessons learned in the cycle just concluded. The United Nations is, and must remain, the forum for the inclusive multilateral cooperation called for by the seriousness of this scourge. The General Assembly should put the Programme of Action in perspective by adopting the principle of holding biennial meetings on its implementation, along with review conferences every five years.

The obligation of countries affected by the illicit trade in small arms to enhance their national legislation and their implementation measures requires effective support from the international community. This should include strengthened international norms in the areas of the export, import and transfer of small arms and in combating illicit brokering. To that end, it is essential to put in place universal, non-discriminatory, legally binding frameworks, to be implemented in the spirit of transparency we have been striving for in the area of conventional weapons.

It is for that reason that Benin has eagerly supported the initiative to begin an intergovernmental consultative process towards the adoption of an arms trade treaty. Benin is prepared to contribute to the implementation of the draft resolution to be adopted on that issue (A/C.1/61/L.55).

My delegation would like to recall that the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, which was adopted by the member States of the Economic Community of West African States, is a good point of reference that illustrates what can be done to make progress in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and their ammunition. We hope that the regional norms contained in the Convention will enjoy broader acceptance in the multilateral context, in particular in order to contribute to the international community's commitment to improve accountability on the part of

producing countries and to eliminate routes for the transfer of weapons from legal to illegal channels.

Similarly, we believe that measures to limit the supply of small arms should be augmented by targeted efforts to eradicate the factors that feed demand for small weapons. In that regard, States must have at their disposal the resources necessary to ensure the safety of individuals and goods on their countries' borders. Special attention should be paid to promoting a culture of peace and the rule of law and to ending youth unemployment. The international community must cooperate further to combat transborder organized crime, the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the use force in the resolution of political disputes. It must also take further steps to protect vulnerable groups affected by armed violence, especially women but, above all, children, in armed conflict.

With regard to anti-personnel mines, we should encourage the efforts undertaken towards the complete elimination of this type of weapon from arsenals, in the context of Ottawa Convention. Benin has been part of the movement against the use of anti-personnel mines and in favour of their elimination. With French cooperation, a demining centre has been opened in the well-known coastal city of Ouidah, Benin. The centre is at the disposal of the international community for the training of deminers. It can also meet United Nations needs as regards the deployment of peacekeeping troops. Benin urges Member States prepared to contribute through concrete efforts to the implementation of the Ottawa Convention to lend their support to the work of the centre, whose mission is to contribute to reclaiming the vital areas held hostage by mines and to the reconstruction of countries emerging from conflict.

Benin also calls for substantial assistance for surviving victims of anti-personnel mines, so as to improve their ability to overcome the challenges associated with their condition. That of course entails alleviating both their physical handicaps and their emotional suffering. Their mutilation cries out for more humane responses in managing hostilities as well as, above all, for disarmament on behalf of the greater well-being of present and future generations.

Mr. Almaabri (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Madam, I have the great pleasure of conveying to you and to the other members of the Bureau our deep gratitude for giving me a further opportunity to address the First Committee. This is a very important body for the promotion and consolidation of the pillars of international peace and security, because it crafts multifaceted strategies, programmes of action and frameworks to address disarmament issues.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons throughout the Republic of Yemen is a complex and widespread phenomenon. We witness an interplay of cumulative historical factors at the root of the numerous armed conflicts that have gripped the entire country in the course of its modern history as a result of successive periods of political conflict. Moreover, Yemen's geographical location in the proximity of flashpoints of tension and areas of armed conflict in the Horn of Africa, its long coastline and rugged topography, and the specificities of its social fabric and culture — which consider the personal weapon a part of a man's personality — all contribute to facilitating the widespread availability of small arms and light weapons throughout the country.

Towards the end of the last century, following the attainment of meaningful political stability on the national stage, the Government of the Republic of Yemen recognized the danger posed by that scourge, as well as the importance of international efforts to combat it. As a result, Yemen participated in the first United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was convened in 2001. Our participation stemmed from our belief that a Programme of Action would provide an appropriate foundation for international efforts and cooperation to address this issue. At the same time, we recognized the importance of taking into account the scope, complexity and multidimensional nature of the problem in Yemen, which meant that the measures needed to address the issue exceeded the resources available at the national level. That makes it necessary to redouble international efforts to support national action in this regard.

The Government of the Republic of Yemen continues to make strenuous efforts to address the problem through a variety of measures and actions, foremost among which was the promulgation of laws and regulations to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In that regard, the Government enacted law No. 40/1992, which provides the main framework to address the issue of weapons. The Government has submitted a new bill to the Yemeni parliament for discussion and adoption that would

address some loopholes in the existing law and would cover all facets of the issue. It is noteworthy in that regard that Yemeni law authorizes the State, and only the State, on the basis of its official powers, to import weapons to meet its basic needs for maintaining peace and security within the country. Individuals are prohibited from importing weapons of any type.

The Government has also closed all retail outlets for the sale of weapons and has implemented a programme aimed at collecting weapons from citizens through direct purchase or by encouraging the people to surrender such arms voluntarily. That programme is being carried out at a heavy financial cost to the State.

The security services concerned are conducting intensive inspection campaigns in all Yemeni cities aimed at seizing unlicensed weapons. The Government is also organizing workshops and training seminars for security personnel and customs officials in a bid to build capacity in the area of analysing and detecting weapons-smuggling activities, and is also training them in inspection and verification in order to prevent transborder smuggling.

The Government has developed an ambitious plan for the deployment of security forces that involves an increased police presence throughout the country and patrols along national inter-city road networks in order to prevent transfers of small arms and light weapons within the territory of the Republic.

The Government has established a national coast guard force entrusted with preventing international trafficking networks from smuggling arms using the Yemeni coastline or territorial waters as transit points for smuggling or for bringing new shipments into the territory of Yemen. However, tight control of our national coastline would require vast resources exceeding our national capacities. Achieving that objective would require greater support and cooperation on the part of the international community.

The development of the national coast guard force is still under way, but our efforts have already yielded results: we have detected two smuggling operations and broken two smuggling rings in Yemen's national territorial waters. The Security Council was advised of the details of those operations. The participants in those operations were seized and have been referred to our courts. The Government is in the process of conducting a study on establishing a border control department to consolidate efforts to combat that phenomenon across borders, including through serious and fruitful cooperation with neighbouring countries.

The Government is also working to ensure that studies and scientific research are carried out to examine the social dimensions of the phenomenon of the spread of weapons and to analyse the results, in order to understand its root causes, to use the findings in the context of a results-oriented approach and to raise the level of public awareness of the adverse impact of weapons on development and stability.

The Government is also encouraging, and working with, civil society organizations in order to address issues related to personal revenge. A high-level committee with subcommissions throughout the governorates has been established. In 2003 the Government hosted a regional conference on small arms and light weapons; it participates in all meetings and activities at the international and regional levels in that regard.

The Government has sought to reach a peaceful settlement through dialogue and negotiation on the question of international borders with neighbouring countries. It has done so on the basis of its conviction that such efforts would contribute to the strengthening of the foundations of regional peace and security and help defuse some of the tensions that had in the past given rise to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Government has concluded a number of security accords with sister countries and neighbouring States; their provisions cover issues related to cooperation and the exchange of information in the area of the combat against weapons smuggling and money-laundering.

The Government of the Republic of Yemen, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and a number of friendly States, has made great progress on mine clearance. Mine clearance has been completed in highly affected areas in a number of governorates, and numerous activities have been carried out in the areas of awareness-raising, technical surveys and support and help for mine victims and their reintegration into society. In addition, a high-level programme of action for mine clearance was adopted for the year 2006.

In closing, the Government of the Republic of Yemen, which has taken the aforementioned measures and made great efforts at the national level in order to eradicate this scourge, would like to reiterate its full

commitment to all international treaties, agreements and programmes of action relating to the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Government calls for greater and more constructive cooperation and coordination at the regional and international levels so as to eliminate that scourge. Such efforts should not contravene the right of peoples under occupation to exercise their right to self-determination or their right to live in freedom, peace and security like other nations, or the right of States to legitimate self-defence in order to maintain their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and to promote and consolidate the pillars of security, stability, peace and social harmony on the basis of the provisions of the relevant international instruments.

Organization of work

The Chairperson: Given the lateness of the hour, I propose to adjourn today's meeting. A few delegations still wish to make statements on the subject of conventional weapons, including delegations wishing to speak in the exercise of the right of reply. Those remaining delegations may therefore make their statements and introduce draft resolutions related to conventional weapons tomorrow, before we begin our thematic discussion on disarmament machinery. Delegations will also have the opportunity to speak on "Other disarmament measures and international security" and on "Regional disarmament and security", and to introduce draft resolutions under those clusters.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.